



The “CANAM Shoot,” 1999

Canadian, U.S. Crews Train Together, And Shoot Together in Home and Home Series

by Captain Mark Nelson

Keeping alive the spirit of the old Canadian Army Trophy tank gunnery competitions held in Europe in the 1980s, Idaho National Guard units and Canadian Army armor units have been training and shooting together for several years now in what has become popularly known as the “CANAM Shoot.”

This past year, the National Guard unit was First Platoon, Charlie Company, 2d Battalion, 116th Cavalry Brigade. The unit conducted its annual training (AT) at the Wainwright Training Area in Alberta, Canada, the second time a platoon from 2-116 has trained with the Canadian Army and competed in the Canadian/American Gunnery Competition. Proponents of the CANAM Shoot, as it is popularly called, say it was designed as a revival of the Canadian Armor Trophy (CAT) competition from the 1980s and early '90s held in Germany.

The first CANAM Shoot was conducted at Gowen Field, Idaho, in the spring of 1997. That year, the 116th Cavalry Brigade hosted the event for the Lord Strathcona's Horse Regiment, which traces its origins to the School of Mounted Infan-

try, established by the Canadian government in July 1885. The regiment participated in both World Wars and the Korean War. It has served in Bosnia and is currently supporting NATO in the Kosovo occupation. The regiment's home is Edmonton, Alberta. In 1997, the Canadians trained and fired the M1A1 to win the first competition.

This year the Canadians hosted the event at Wainwright Training Area, Alberta, a maneuver training area with numerous gunnery ranges and an artillery impact area. Prior to the CANAM competition, the U.S. platoon was placed under the operational control of C Squadron, Lord Strathcona Horse Regiment, Royal Canadian Armed Forces. Major Paul Dangerfield, the squadron commander, commanded them during tactical maneuver training.

The Canadian squadron is similar in composition to the U.S. tank company, but has 19 tanks, compared to 14, and is commanded by a major. The platoon was integrated into C Squadron's maneuver plan as the third platoon.

Preparing to begin maneuver training at the Wainwright Training Area in Alberta, Canada are, above left, a Canadian Army Leopard I, and at right, a U.S. M1A1 crewed by National Guardsmen.

Note lack of MILES belts—the Canadians depend on O/Cs for adjudication.

The two-week AT consisted of a live-fire exercise during the first week. C Squadron conducted a total of three squadron (company) offensive live-fire iterations with one iteration daily. The scenario consisted of a series of offensive engagements against a notional combat reconnaissance patrol, forward security element, and advance guard main body. The Canadian platoons fired live ammunition during all three iterations. During the first two iterations, the U.S. crews familiarized themselves with the terrain and command and control relationship with the Canadians, and fired live ammunition during the third iteration. The U.S. platoon was primarily used as the supporting effort during the squadron's deliberate breaching operations and assaults



Above left, Canadian and American platoons pose for a "take-home" photo at conclusion of the exercise.



Above, the American brigade commander, the American platoon leader, and a tanker from the Boise unit accept the trophy.

onto the objective. This was a combined arms live-fire exercise, with field artillery integrated into the exercise to provide training in calls for indirect fire.

Live artillery rounds landing on the objective while overwatching with direct fires added to the realism. The long-range fires of the M1A1 were impressive to the Canadian forces. They gained an appreciation of the increased lethality and range of the 120mm, versus the 105mm, main gun.

The second week of annual training consisted of regimental (battalion) maneuver training. Again, the U.S. platoon conducted training as part of C Squadron. The three days of maneuver training consisted of a series of offensive attacks against a defending enemy. The scenario was similar to that of the live fire but was replicated using a sister unit as the opposing force. The large training area provided invaluable maneuver experience, with densely vegetated terrain that was very different from the desert conditions of southwestern Idaho. The biggest shortfall in the training was the lack of MILES. The exercise controllers assessed casualties.

The climax of the AT was the CANAM platoon gunnery competition. The CANAM Shoot is based on a Tank Table XII day scenario. Platoons are given an operations order, conduct their troop leading procedures, and execute the lane. Only the gunnery portion of the exercise is used in the score. The gunnery competition consisted of a prep day and day of execution. Each platoon zeroed their weapons systems and conducted troop-leading procedures on the prep day. The platoons started in a tactical assembly area and attacked the course in true tank table XII fashion. The actual range was 800 meters wide and consisted of three series of hills on which the platoons conducted the defensive engagements. The

offensive engagements were conducted while executing platoon bounds to the next battle position. There were a total of 28 vehicle and six troop targets presented. The U.S. platoon shot first and earned a score of 29, hitting 26 vehicle targets and three troop targets. The Canadian platoon shot second and earned a score of 28, hitting 26 vehicle targets and two troop targets. The actual competition consisted of two presentations of four targets each, with eight targets presented. The U.S. platoon won the competition by a single troop target and returned to Boise, Idaho, with the CANAM trophy. The close results reflect the gunnery expertise of both the Royal Canadian Armored Force and the Idaho Army National Guard.

The result of the CANAM competition speaks for itself with respect to gunnery training. The AC/RC officers and NCOs who supported the unit conducted a Training Assessment Model (TAM) for the platoon. The unit will now be able to integrate the lessons learned as documented in the TAM and numerous after-action reviews conducted in the field to assist them in planning their future training.

Conducting AT with the Canadians provided several benefits for the 2-116th. First, it provided an invaluable maneuver and live-fire training opportunity for its soldiers and junior leaders. Second, it provided a unique opportunity for U.S. soldiers to train with and become familiar with conducting tactical operations with an allied force. And finally, it provided mobilization training for both the soldiers who deployed, as well as those who facilitated their deployment at the Mobil-

ization Station (MS). As an armor officer serving in an AC/RC assignment, I believe this is an outstanding opportunity for the ARNG, as well as the active Army, and look forward to assisting them train up for CANAM 2001. The downsizing of the U.S. Army and its great number of worldwide commitments increase the possibility of the National Guard being deployed and fulfilling its role as a part of the Total Force Army.

CPT Mark D. Nelson was commissioned in Armor in 1990 through the ROTC program at the University of Utah. As a lieutenant, he served as a tank platoon leader and assistant S3 in 6-40 Armor, Berlin Brigade, and as a tank and scout platoon leader in 1-8 Cav, 2d Bde, 1st CD, Ft. Hood, Texas. As a captain, he served as regimental plans officer, 11th ACR (OPFOR), 1/11 ACR S4, and commanded D Company (4th Motorized Rifle Battalion), 1/11 ACR (OPFOR), at the National Training Center, Ft. Irwin, Calif. He is a graduate of AOBC, SPLC, BMOC, and AOAC, and holds a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Golden Gate University. He is currently serving in an AC/RC assignment as an armor trainer with the 3d RTBn, 5th AR Brigade for the 116th Cavalry Brigade, Idaho Army National Guard, at Gowen Field, Idaho.